CARACOUS. Another shop; Sudanese. Where the Sudanese go the Arabs do not go if they can help it. Consequently you see nothing but Negroes here. But this evening I find Fedor Rosenberg here too. The play has not begun yet. (The intermissions are always much longer than the play, which lasts only a quarter of an hour.) One Negro is shaking castanets, another is beating on an oblong drum, and the third, an enormous fellow, is wagging his head in front of Rosenberg. Seated almost at our feet, he sings, improvising a monotonous ballad in which he says, in so far as I can understand it, that he is very poor, that Rosenberg is very rich, and that Negroes always need money. And since he looks rather fierce and the Arabs claim that one can never trust the camel, the Negro, or the desert for long, we make haste to show how generous we are.

CARACOUS. Another shop. Here the play is merely a pretense for assignations. Always the same habitues, from one evening to another, under the benevolent eye of the proprietor. A strangely beautiful child plays the bagpipes; everyone gathers around him; because of him; the others are his gallants. One of them plays that odd drum in the shape of a vase, the bottom of which must be of donkey's skin. The piper makes the cafe what it is. He seems to smile at everyone without favoring anyone. Some of them recite verses to him or sing them; he replies, approaches, but most often, I think, it does not go beyond a few caresses in front of everyone. This shop is not a brothel, but rather a court of love. At times one of the children gets up and dances; at times two of them together, and then the dance becomes a sort of broad mimicry.

The play itself is almost always obscene. I should like to know the

history of Caracous. He must be very ancient. I have been told that he came from Constantinople and that everywhere except Constantinople and Tunis the police would have forbidden his appearance on the stage; he appears only at the time of Ramadan. For forty days everyone fasts from sunrise to sundown; a complete fast—no food, or drink, or tobacco, or perfumes, or women. All the senses held in check all day take their revenge at night and everyone has as good a time as possible. There are certainly other, very religious Arabs who spend the night, after a very frugal meal, in meditations and prayers, just as there are others who continue to have a good time even by day. But that is frequent only in the big cities contaminated by the French; the Arabs ordinarily practice their religion very scrupulously.

This last evening I wanted to visit again, before fleeing, all the rarest and strangest things that Tunis had shown me. I shall remember having followed for some time that army band returning to its barracks, very loud, always in tune, fine and victorious, while in spots along the